



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585
September 24, 2002

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) report addressing storage and disposition of inactive actinide nuclear materials is provided in response to your May 20, 2002, letter.

The long-term holding of unneeded actinide material, even in small quantities stored in appropriate containers and vaults, is an undesirable condition. Storage space for this material is limited and costly to construct and maintain. Retaining inactive material with no defined programmatic use adversely impacts operations and mission accomplishment. We agree with the Board that additional emphasis needs to be applied to planning and implementing disposition pathways for as much of the inactive inventory as possible. Since, in most cases, this material does not create a significant incremental risk to workers or the public, we propose to address the overall disposal issue in a well-planned and properly funded manner. Since this work will compete for the same facilities and personnel as other high-priority safety and programmatic work, it must be integrated with that work. In some cases, additional near-term actions may be required to insure some of those items are stabilized and packaged for interim storage. It is my expectation that we should begin to see inactive actinide footprint reduction in Fiscal Year 2004, depending largely on the availability of disposition paths.

The enclosed report responds to the six Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board issues and discusses NNSA site status. We will complete three additional documents relating to disposition planning, evaluation of materials continuing need, and sealed-source disposition. These documents will be provided to you by January 31, 2003, as described in the report. At the same time, we will identify our strategy for additional activities to improve storage and disposition of inactive actinide materials. We are committed to addressing important issues using a risk-based prioritization approach, leading to resource-loaded disposition plans.

Planning and implementation of future activities will be supported and facilitated by the Inactive Actinides Working Group (IAWG) whose members individually will represent their sites' interests and collectively will assist NNSA in addressing improved



management of inactive actinide materials complex wide. I have appointed a senior Defense Programs Manager, Max Clausen, Acting Director of the Office of Strategic Materials and Transportation, to be responsible for ensuring accomplishment of required actions to address inactive actinide materials management issues and needs.

The resolution of these issues will require a combination of institutional change, shifts in programmatic priorities and resources, and increased management attention at both NNSA Headquarters and sites. Our program offices, in coordination with the IAWG, continue to support sites activities in resolving the identified issues.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 586-2179 or have your staff contact Ms. Diane Larsen at (301) 903-7316.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Everet H. Beckner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "B".

Everet H. Beckner
Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs

Enclosure

ccs w/attachments (distribution electronically):

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